

Professor	Mary B. Dunn, Ph.D.
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Office Hours	Wednesday 11:00am-12:00pm and by appointment
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Course Web Page	via Blackboard

Course Objectives

This graduate course aims to improve students' writing, speaking and interpersonal communication. The McCombs School of Business designed this class to help MPA students improve their communication skills and facilitate their success in the accounting profession. Leaders consistently rank communication skills among the most desirable qualities they look for in new employees. Numerous research studies show the link between effective communication skills and promotions to leadership positions and success in careers more generally. Communication skills are especially critical for accountants who must exchange technical information with a diverse set of audiences. Investors, capital markets and the government rely on accountants to prepare clear, concise, and accurate messages that convey the financial situation of organizations and projects. Clients expect accountants to build productive relationships, gather necessary information, prepare analytical reports and communicate recommendations effectively. This course is very practical, but it is grounded in concepts and theories of communication. At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to:

- Analyze communication situations and audiences to make choices about the most effective and efficient way to communicate and deliver messages
- Write and present messages that meet your objectives to inform, persuade or evoke goodwill
- Write business documents that are clear, concise and grammatically correct
- Deliver effective business presentations in contexts that may require either extemporaneous or impromptu oral presentations
- Develop effective interpersonal skills and create productive relationships with colleagues and clients
- Conduct research that includes the use of electronic library resources and the Internet
- Assess the validity and reliability of sources to substantiate arguments in written and oral reports and boost your credibility as a writer and speaker
- Provide feedback, accept feedback, and use feedback to improve your communication skills
- Use communication technology appropriately and effectively

Required Texts

- 1) *Business Essentials: Business Communications*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA
- 2) *Save Our Slides* by William Earnest. Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company
- 3) *Articles and Handouts on Blackboard* (Bb)

Additional Resource (Recommended But Not Required)

Mary Ellen Guffey's *Business Communication: Process and Product*. The undergraduate Business Communications course at McCombs uses the 6th edition as a required text. It is an excellent resource to have on your shelf! The 5th edition is also appropriate.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is an essential component of this course. I will circulate a sign-in sheet at the start of class each day so please come to class on time every day. Students should view class attendance as they would work attendance and communicate to their peers and instructor in an appropriate manner. Since we have only a short time to cover the material, you should NOT miss class. Class sessions include exercises and activities that help you develop your writing and speaking skills. We also spend a lot of class time working in groups to improve your interpersonal skills and your ability to give and receive constructive feedback. If you have an emergency or another legitimate reason for missing class, please contact me ASAP. Absences will affect your final grade. More than 2 absences will result in a failing participation grade and may put you in jeopardy of failing the course.

Laptops, Phones and Electronic Devices

I do not allow the use of computers during class. Laptops are very distracting and they decrease the quality of class discussions. Also, please remember to turn off your cell phones, pagers and other electronic devices when you get to class. If you have an emergency and must remain available for contact by people outside our class, please let me know in advance and I will grant you an exception for the day.

Missed/ Late Papers, Homework and Class Assignments

All assignments are due *at the start of class* unless otherwise noted. I CANNOT ACCEPT late or missed assignments. I will not grant extensions for written assignments unless students have a verifiable medical emergency. Given our schedule, there are no opportunities to make up oral presentations or group work for this class, so please be prepared on the day assigned. Students with a medical emergency can appeal in writing within 24 hours for reconsideration for a missed individual writing assignments or oral presentations. Assignments we complete in class cannot be made up. This policy is strictly enforced.

University Policies Relevant to this Course

Academic Integrity

The responsibilities of both students and faculty with regard to scholastic dishonesty are described in detail in the Policy Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty for the McCombs School of Business, available online at http://www.mcombs.utexas.edu/udean/Scholastic_Responsibility.asp. You are responsible for reading, understanding and following the Policy Statement on Scholastic Dishonesty for the McCombs School of Business and the policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty on the Student Judicial Services website. I will follow and enforce these provisions. Included in this statement is your responsibility for understanding what actions constitute scholastic dishonesty.

Class Websites and Student Privacy

Students who do not want their names included in these electronic class rosters must restrict their directory information in the Office of the Registrar, Main Building, Room 1. For more information visit the Registrar's website at: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/faq.html#directory>

Services for Students with Disabilities

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259, 471-4641 TTY, or online at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/>

Religious Holidays

A student who is absent from a class or examination for the observance of a religious holy day may complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence, if proper notice has been given. Review this policy at: <http://www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/catalogs/gi03-04/ch4/ch4g.html#religion>

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Please note: This schedule is tentative and is subject to change

DATE	TOPICS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
Monday, 7/13	Introduction to the course	READ: SEC <i>Plain English Handbook</i> (Bb) 1) What is Plain English? Why important? 2) What are some common writing problems in SEC and/or legal documents?
Wednesday, 7/15	Business Writing & Library Session	READ: Essentials Introduction, Chpts 1-5 SKIM: Morrison's Bare Essentials (Bb) HOMEWORK DUE: Introduction email
Monday, 7/20	Business Correspondence	READ: Swift article (Bb) READ: <i>Tips on Revising Written Work</i> (Bb) HOMEWORK DUE: Executive Summary PREPARE to share a 3 minute summary of your article with the class
Wednesday, 7/22	Business Presentations	READ: Essentials Chpts 6-8 READ: <i>Save our Slides</i> READ & WATCH: http://www.pcworld.com/article/157114/jobs_has_been_an_extraordinary_spokesman.html HOMEWORK DUE: Cover Letter and Resume
Monday, 7/27	Intercultural Communication/ Team Presentations	READ: Guide to Effective Feedback (Bb) READ: Tannen article (Bb), prepare for discussion PREPARE: Your Team Presentation HOMEWORK DUE: Team Proposal CLASSWORK: Feedback to presenters
Wednesday, 7/29	Persuasive Writing and Speaking	READ: Conger article (Bb), prepare for discussion HOMEWORK DUE: Critique of your team presentation
Monday, 8/3	Persuasive Presentations	PREPARE: Your persuasive presentation HOMEWORK DUE: Revised Cover Letter

		CLASSWORK: Feedback to presenters
Wednesday, 8/5	Persuasive Presentations Cont'd Interpersonal Communication and Technology	ASSIGNMENT DUE: Interview Memo PREPARE to present a 3 minute summary of your interview to the class READ: Chpt 9 READ: Hallowell article (Bb), prepare for discussion
Monday, 8/10	Practice Presentations	HOMEWORK DUE: Critique of your presentation
Wednesday, 8/12	Final Group Presentations and Reflection on learning	ASSIGNMENT DUE: Final Group Paper ASSIGNMENT DUE: 2 nd Reflection Paper CLASSWORK DUE: Feedback to presenters

Percentage Weights of Work

Homework Assignments (graded except introduction email)

Introduction email (credit/no credit grade)	=	1%
Executive Summary	=	2%
Cover letter & Resume (2% or 3% if no revision)	=	2%
Cover letter Revision (optional)	=	1%
Team Plan, Contract, Meeting Agenda & Transcript	=	2%

In-Class Assignments (credit/no credit grades)

Written Feedback you provide	=	2%
- to your peers about their cover letters		
- to your classmates about their oral presentations		
- to me about the class (Survey on Blackboard)		
- to me about your team's process and performance		
Other In-Class Assignments	=	2%
-may include grammar exercises, revisions, outlines, in-class writing, etc.		

Major Writing Assignments:

Team Report	=	16%
Individual Report on Interview with Accountant	=	14%
Individual Reflection Paper	=	10%

Major Presentation Assignments:

Group Intercultural Presentation	=	6%
Individual Persuasive Presentation	=	10%
Final Group Presentation	=	15%

Participation

Class Participation	=	12%
Team Participation / Peer Evaluation (by teammates)	=	5%

TOTAL 100%

You must complete all major assignments to pass this course!

A Note about Grades: McCombs grading policies reserve “A” grades for students with truly exceptional performance. This means that instructors are to award “A” grades only when students demonstrate insight and creativity that go over and above the stated requirements. You should expect to work hard in this course. Like all of your other business school courses, this is a rigorous class. Since this course has a significant experiential component, it may appear to be a bit different from your other courses. This course requires students to exert significant effort and practice to master written, oral and interpersonal communication skills.

Final Course Grades are computed using the following scale

A = 93.0%-100%	C = 73.0% - 76.9%
A- = 90.0% - 92.9%	C- = 70.0% - 72.9%
B+ = 87.0%-89.9%	D+ = 67.0% - 69.9%
B = 83.0% - 86.9%	D = 63.0% - 66.9%
B- = 80.0% – 82.9%	D- = 60.0% - 62.9%
C+ = 77.0% - 79.9%	F = 59.9% and below

GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

The nature and purpose of each assignment, along with specific grading criteria will be distributed in class. I will evaluate all of your written work (summaries, letters, memos, papers and reports) on your ability to write according to the following criteria for business writing, derived from AACSB writing rubric (on page 6 of this syllabus):

Clear, Concrete, and Concise

- Clear - write so your concepts, organization, paragraphs, and sentences are clearly understandable to your audience
- Concrete - write specifically for your audience and use examples to support your ideas
- Concise - write simply and directly, unless you have a specific purpose for doing otherwise

Organization

- Organize letters, memos, and reports around the main ideas as detailed in the assignment objectives
- Lay out main ideas clearly and support them with specific examples
- Connect all parts of your writing with logical, smooth, and understandable transitions

Format and Style

- Use a business style that is related to the level of formality of the communication
- Base your style on the audience to whom you are writing
- Choose a format that is appropriate to your audience, the purposes of your communication, and your organizational context

Grammar, Mechanics and Punctuation

- Proofread, edit and revise to catch and correct typos and errors

GENERAL GRADING CRITERIA FOR ORAL PRESENTATIONS

A general rubric for assessing presentations created by the Speech Communication Association is on page 7 of this syllabus. In addition to assignment-specific criteria, I will evaluate your oral presentations on your ability to:

- Analyze the needs of your audience
- Plan, organize, and deliver a presentation in a conversational manner
- Speak comfortably and articulately before a group in formal and impromptu situations
- Maintain an audience's attention and interest
- Use effective visual aids

GENERAL CRITERIA FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION

Specific criteria for participation scoring is on page 8 of this syllabus. You are expected to behave in a professional manner at all times. This includes: coming prepared to all classes by doing required readings and assignments, providing notice as soon as you learn of an unavoidable absence, contributing useful content to the class discussions, being respectful of others' perspectives in the classroom, and providing helpful comments to others. I will assign you a participation score for each day of class. To determine your final participation grade I will consider the following sources:

1. My assessment of your participation based on my records from class.
2. Your peers' assessment of your participation based on a survey at the end of the semester.
3. Your own (honest and accurate) assessment of your performance in class.

AACSB WRITING RUBRIC

Criteria	Poor	Satisfactory	Strong
Organization	Writing is not concise and tends to ramble; lack of direction interferes with audience understanding; lacks clear topic sentences.	Focus and direction of writing is acceptable and does not interfere with audience understanding; minor errors in cohesion	Writing is concise and clear; information is easy to understand; focus and direction of the writing are obvious to audience
Introduction and Conclusion	Main idea or purpose is not established in the appropriate paragraph; conclusion does not include contact information, end date, goodwill, or future relationship	Main idea or purpose is established in the appropriate paragraph; conclusion is satisfactory but lacks at least one important statement	Introduction not only establishes main idea or purpose as appropriate, but also has an interesting hook; conclusion includes every necessary action or statement
Punctuation and Spelling	Writing contains numerous and/or significant errors which distract from the message	Writing contains occasional errors which do not distract from the message	Writing is nearly error free with no item that distracts from the message
Sentence Structure and Transitions	Sentence structure lacks readability and/or is awkward; connections between topics, ideas, or arguments lack clear transition	Most sentences build within paragraphs for readability; a few sentences lack transition	Sentences are clear, well developed, and express concise ideas; transitions create strong readability
Background and Critical Thinking	Ideas lack support or are expressed with personal views; no original thoughts that show critical thinking	Ideas are supported with occasional citations or class lessons; some individual, original ideas are expressed	Arguments are supported with cited references or relevant facts; strong use of originality is shown throughout the message
Professional Format and Tone	Document is not professionally formatted; tone and language are inappropriate	Document follows most of the traditional format guidelines but has at least one distracting error; tone and language use are fair	Professional format style is obvious; all aspects of the tone and language lend to audience's verbal and non-verbal understanding

Adapted from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) Assessment Writing Rubric

Basic Criteria for Grading Presentations*

To receive a C on your presentation, you must meet the following standards:

1. The presentation must be original.
2. The type of presentation must be appropriate to the assignment.
3. The topic must be appropriate for the audience and sufficiently focused.
4. The presentation must fit the time requirements of the assignment.
5. The presentation must be presented on the day assigned.
6. Main ideas must be supported with facts and figures, appropriate testimony, examples, or narratives.
7. The presentation must have a clear sense of purpose.
8. The presentation must have a clearly identifiable and appropriate design, complete with an introduction and a conclusion.
9. The presentation must be presented extemporaneously.
10. The presentation must satisfy any specific requirements of the assignment, such as number of references, formal outline, or use of visual aids.
11. The speaker must use language correctly.

To receive a B on your presentation, you must meet the following standards:

1. Satisfy all requirements for a C-level presentation.
2. Select a challenging topic and adapt it appropriately to your audience.
3. Reflect a greater depth of research
4. Clearly identify sources of information and ideas.
5. Create and sustain attention throughout the presentation.
6. Make effective use of transitions, previews, and summaries.
7. Use good oral style.
8. Present with poise.
9. Follow all guidelines for effective slide design (slides use appropriate/readable fonts, are readable and free from typos)

To receive an A on your presentation, you must meet the following standards:

1. Satisfy all requirements for a B-level presentation.
2. Demonstrate imagination and creativity in topic selection and development.
3. Develop and sustain strong bonds of identification among the speaker, audience, and topic.
4. Consistently adapt information and supporting material to the experiential world of your audience.
5. Reflect an even greater depth of research (Refer to your assignment sheet for each presentation)
6. Demonstrate artful use of language and stylistic techniques.
7. Make a polished presentation that artfully integrates verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

A D presentation does not meet one or more of the standards for a C speech or:

1. Is obviously unrehearsed.
2. Is based entirely on biased information or unsupported opinions.

An E presentation does not meet three or more of the standards for a C speech, reflects either of the problems associated with a D speech, or:

1. Uses fabricated supporting material.
2. Deliberately distorts evidence.
3. Is plagiarized.

*Adapted to fit business audiences from the Speech Communication Association.

Guide to Effective Class Participation

Excellent participation (A-level):

- Contribute actively in all class exercises and activities.
- Share insights of relevant information from reading and from personal experience
- Make succinct comments to moves discussion forward rather than repeat what others have said
- Clarify points that others may not understand
- Demonstrate excellent ability to apply, analyze, and synthesize course material
- Demonstrate willingness to take risks by answering challenging questions or offering important insights from personal experience
- Never miss class, except for an unavoidable emergency

Good Participation (B-level):

- Participate enthusiastically in all class exercises and activities.
- Participate regularly and voluntarily in class discussions
- Contribute relevant and important points to topics of discussion
- Analyze, apply, and synthesize course material
- Almost never miss class

Fair Participation (C-level):

- Participate in class discussion only when called upon
- Contribute relevant and important points to topics of discussion
- Attend class regularly, but miss more classes than others in the course

Poor Participation: any of the following (D-level):

- Reluctantly participate in discussion, exercises and activities
- Make comments that are irrelevant, inaccurate or not helpful
- Miss class often

Unacceptable Participation: any of the following will result in failing participation grade

- Fail to contribute in class, even when called upon
- Fail to participate in class exercises and activities
- Make comments that are inappropriate or offensive to others
- Behave in a manner that is distracting or disruptive to the class
- Miss class regularly

*** As graduate students at McCombs, I expect you all to participate at the A and B levels. Please use this sheet as a guide to inform and reflect upon your participation in class. If you think your participation is not up to A or B standards, it is your responsibility to come to me to discuss ways to enhance your participation.***